You are authorized and directed to publish this memorandum in the *Federal Register*.

William J. Clinton

NOTE: This memorandum was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 1.

Remarks Announcing AIDS Initiatives

December 1, 1998

Thank you, Amy, for your magnificent remarks and the power of your example. Thank you, Cynthia, for coming to this big, scary crowd. [*Laughter*] She was nervous. I said, ''Well, look at the bright side. At least you got out of school for a day.'' [*Laughter*]

I thank the other children who are here with us. And I want to thank all the members of our administration who have helped so much in this cause: Secretary Albright; Brian Atwood; Dr. Satcher; our AIDS Policy Director, Sandy Thurman; members of the Council on HIV and AIDS. We're glad to have Nafis Sadik here, the Director of the U.N. Population Fund. Richard Socarides from the White House, I thank you and all the other members of the administration. And I, too, want to join in expressing my appreciation to the Members of Congress who Brian mentioned for their support for AIDS funding.

But I especially want to thank Amy for being here and reminding us of what this is all about. When she was speaking, my mind wandered back to an incident that occurred when I was running for President in 1992. Some of you have heard me say this before, but I was in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, a place largely known for its enormous percentage of Czech and Slovak citizens. And there was in the crowd at this rally where I was speaking a woman who was either Czech or Slovak, probably, holding an African-American baby. And I said. ''Whose baby is this?'' She said, ''This is my baby.'' And I said, ''Where is this baby from?'' She said, ''Florida, I got her from Florida.'' [*Laughter*] And it was October in Cedar Rapids, and she should have been in Florida, probably. [*Laughter*] She said, ''This baby was born with AIDS and abandoned, and no one would take this baby.'' This woman had—her marriage had dissolved; she was raising her own children alone. But because she heard about children like this wonderful little girl, she adopted this baby.

And every year since, about once a year, I see this young child. I've watched her grow up now, and I'm happy to tell you that 6 years later she's still alive and doing pretty well. She comes to the NIH for regular checkups, and she comes by the White House to see her friend. And every time I see Jimiya, I am reminded of what this whole thing is about.

And I think I should tell you one other thing. When Amy was standing up here with me and I was telling her what a fine job she did, she said, ''I'm so glad that Cynthia could be here and that I could say Carla's name in your presence.''

This is, I think, very important for people who have not been touched in some personal way—who have never been at the bedside of a dying friend, who have never looked into the eyes of a child orphaned by AIDS or infected with HIV—to understand. And I believe, always, that if somehow we could reach to the heart of people, we would always do better in dealing with problems, for our mind always conjures a million excuses in dealing with any great difficulty.

Let me begin, even in this traumatic moment, to say we have a lot to celebrate on this AIDS Day. We celebrate the example of Amy and Cynthia. Just think, a decade ago people really believed that AIDS was unstoppable; the diagnosis was a virtual death sentence; there was an enormous amount of ignorance and prejudice and fear about HIV transmission. Most of us knew people who couldn't get into apartment houses or were being kicked out or otherwise—their children couldn't be in school because of fears that people had about it. Every day, for people who had HIV or AIDS and their families, every day was a struggle a decade ago, a struggle for basic information, for treatment, for funding, and all too often, for simple compassion.

For 6 years, thanks to many of you, we have worked hard to change this picture and so have tens of thousands of other people across our country and across the globe.

We've worked hard to draw attention to AIDS and to better direct our resources by creating the office of National AIDS Policy and the President's Council on HIV and AIDS. We had the first-ever White House conference on AIDS. We helped to ensure that people with HIV and AIDS cannot be denied health benefits for preexisting conditions. We accelerated the approval of more than a dozen new AIDS drugs, helping hundreds of thousands of people with AIDS to live longer and more productive lives.

Working together with members of both parties in the Congress, we increased our investment in AIDS research to an historic $1.8 billion. This year we secured $262 million in new funding for the Ryan White CARE Act, providing medical treatment, medication, even transportation to families coping with AIDS. This October we declared that AIDS had reached crisis proportions in the African-American, Hispanic-American, and other minority communities, and fought for a $156 million initiative to address that. Today the Vice President is announcing $200 million in new grants for communities around the country to provide housing for people with AIDS.

The results of these and other efforts have been remarkable. For the first time since the epidemic began, the number of Americans diagnosed with AIDS has begun to decline. For the first time, deaths due to AIDS in the United States have declined. For the first time, therefore, there is hope that we can actually defeat AIDS.

But all around us there is, as we have heard from all the previous speakers, fresh evidence that the epidemic is far from over, our work is far from finished, that there are rising numbers of AIDS in countries like Zimbabwe, where 11 men, women, and children become infected every minute of every day. There are still too many children orphaned by AIDS, tens of thousands here in America, tens of millions in developing nations around the world.

And when so many people are suffering and with HIV transmission disproportionately high, still, among our own young people here in America, it's all right to celebrate our progress, but we cannot rest until we have actually put a stop to AIDS. I believe we can do it by developing a vaccine, by increasing our investment in other forms of research, by improving our care for those who are infected and our support for their families.

Last year at Morgan State University, I declared that we should redouble our efforts to develop an AIDS vaccine within a decade. Today I am pleased to announce a $200 million investment in cutting-edge research at the NIH to develop a vaccine. That's a 33-percent increase over last year. With this historic investment, we are one step closer to putting an end to the epidemic for all people.

I'm also pleased to say that there will be more than $160 million for other new research critical to fighting AIDS around the world, from new strategies to prevent and treat AIDS in children to new clinical trials to reduce transmission.

And as hard as we are working to stop the spread of AIDS, we cannot forget our profound obligation for the heartbreaking youngest victims of the disease: the orphaned children left in its wake. Around the world, as we have heard, millions of children have lost their parents. Their number is expected to rise to 40 million over the next 10 to 15 years. Some of them are free of AIDS; others are not. But sick or well, too many are left without parents to protect them, to teach them right from wrong, to guide them through life, and make them believe that they can live their lives to the fullest.

We cannot restore to them all they have lost, but we can give them a future, a foster family, enough food to eat, medical care, a chance to make the most of their lives by helping them to stay in school. Today, through Mr. Atwood's agency, we are committing another $10 million in emergency relief that will, though seemingly a small amount, actually make a huge difference for many thousands of children in need around the world.

I'm also directing Sandy Thurman to lead a fact-finding mission to Africa, where 90 percent of the AIDS orphans live. Following the mission she will report back to me with recommendations on what more we can do to help these children and give them something not only to live for but to hope for.

Eleven years ago, on the first World AIDS Day, we vowed to put an end to the AIDS epidemic. Eleven years from now, I hope we can say that the steps we took today made that end come about. If it happens, it will be in no small measure because of people like you in this room, by your unfailing, passionate devotion to this cause, a cause we see most clearly expressed in the two people sitting right behind me.

Thank you all, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:15 p.m. in Room 450 of the Old Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Amy Slemmer, HIV/AIDS activist, who introduced the President, her adopted daughter, Cynthia, and Carla Edwina Barrett, Cynthia's biological mother.

Radio Remarks Announcing Housing Grants for People With AIDS

December 1, 1998

For too many Americans living with AIDS, poverty is nearly as much a threat as the disease itself. People with AIDS face enormous medical bills and are often too sick to hold a job. Without our help, many would be forced to live in unfit housing or even to become homeless. We must not turn our backs on these Americans when they need us most. Today I am announcing $221 million in grants that will help meet the housing needs of the 85,000 Americans who have AIDS and those who live with a family member with the disease. These grants, administered by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, will mean that people fighting AIDS don't have to also fight to keep a roof over their heads.

NOTE: The President's remarks were recorded at approximately 5:47 p.m. on November 24 in the Oval Office at the White House for later broadcast. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 1.

Proclamation 7153—World AIDS Day, 1998

December 1, 1998

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

On World AIDS Day, we are heartened by the knowledge that our unprecedented investments in AIDS research have resulted in new treatments that are prolonging the lives of many people living with the disease. Thousands of scientists, health care professionals, and patients themselves have joined together to advance our understanding of HIV and AIDS and improve treatment options. Because of the heroic efforts of these people, fewer and fewer Americans are losing their lives to AIDS, and for that we are immensely thankful.

But the AIDS epidemic is far from over. Within racial and ethnic minority communities, HIV and AIDS are a severe and ongoing crisis. While the number of deaths in our country attributed to AIDS has declined for 2 consecutive years, AIDS remains the leading killer of African American men aged 25–44 and the second leading killer of African American women in the same age group. African Americans, who comprise only 13 percent of the U.S. population, accounted for 43 percent of new AIDS cases in 1997 and 36 percent of all AIDS cases. Hispanic Americans represent just 10 percent of our population, but they account for more than 20 percent of new AIDS cases; and AIDS is also becoming a critical concern to Native American and Asian American communities. Young people of every racial and ethnic community are also disproportionately impacted by AIDS, both in the number of new AIDS cases and in the number of new HIV infections. In fact, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that approximately half of all new HIV infections in the United States occur in people under age 25 and that one-quarter occur in people under age 22.